
Ten Points Every
Parent Should Know
**Before Sending a
Child to Israel**

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1. AN HONEST, OPEN AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD CAN BE CRUCIAL TO HIS OR HER SUCCESS.

For many teenagers, learning in Israel will be a life-transforming experience. But with transformation comes turmoil, confusion and uncertainty, mixed with excitement and enthusiasm. As a parent, your job is to guide your child through this tumultuous period of life with patience and understanding. Make no mistake: despite what they may say or how they may act, your child craves your involvement and connection, but at the same time they need their space to develop into their own “mentch.”

Maintaining this delicate balance can be challenging but much of the difficulty can be prevented before they go to Israel. During this time it is crucial to develop an open relationship with your child. Allow them to feel that they can openly discuss their hopes and worries, their successes and disappointments, and most importantly, that you will respond with understanding and concern. Much of this involves simply listening non-judgmentally... with patience.

With this relationship, you and your child will be better equipped to face the challenges that will come up in Israel. Start early, listen a lot, and maintain their trust so you can guide them when they need you most.

2. YOUR TEENAGER WILL HAVE A LOT OF FREEDOM. MAKE SURE THEY ARE PREPARED FOR IT.

No matter which yeshiva or seminary your child will be attending, they will have more freedom than they have at home. This freedom can be healthy for their social and emotional development, but the sudden flood of independence can easily overwhelm some teens. The first few months of the school year in Israel are notorious for their late nights.

To alleviate this, gradually allow them more freedom during the months before they go to Israel. By giving them a sense of guided independence before they get on the plane, you can alleviate their confusion by their newfound independence during the beginning of their stay in Israel. Be careful to only relax your supervision over their time not their behavior.

3. MORE FREEDOM MEANS MORE CHOICES. HELP THEM MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES.

Make them aware that they will be faced with the serious responsibility of making their own choices. Sometimes, very difficult choices. Encourage them to make a conscious decision each time and help them understand that there is greater and longer-lasting pleasure from overcoming temptation than from indulging every whim for a fleeting thrill.

4. ESTABLISH A CONTACT PERSON IN YOUR CHILD'S YESHIVA OR SEMINARY AND STAY IN TOUCH.

Menahalim in Israel unanimously stress open, consistent and constant communication between parents and the school to ensure a student's success. In this area, parents should take the initiative to establish contact with the Rosh Yeshiva or Menahel before a child arrives in Israel and identify a contact person. Most often, this person will be their rebbi or teacher since he will be able to best assess their level of progress.

Once you find that person, stay in touch! Every situation is different, but the rule of thumb is to be in contact with someone in the school at least once a month. You can be assured that they will pay closer attention to your child if they know that you will be calling regularly for updates on his/her progress.

What should you ask when you call? Some suggestions include: “*How are they doing in general?*” “*Are they staying out very late?*” “*Do they have good friends?*” “*Is the child close with the contact or another Rebbi or teacher?*” “*Is the child exhibiting any dramatic changes in behavior?*”

5. ESTABLISH CLEAR REWARDS FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR.

Though this may seem childish, incentives work with people of all ages. When your child is so far away from your watchful eye, you have to use everything you can to ensure that he stays on track.

Generally, keeping to the school schedule and following the rules are appropriate behavior. You can reward this with small but meaningful incentives periodically throughout the year.

6. ESTABLISH CLEAR CONSEQUENCES FOR HIGHLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR.

Make sure he or she knows that learning in Israel is not a free ticket to freedom and there will be serious consequences for serious misbehavior. This can include less spending money, less travel freedom, and for the most serious infractions, coming back home.

7. SORT OUT ALL MONEY, COMMUNICATION, DANGER, AND FREE TIME ISSUES CLEARLY BEFORE THEY GO TO ISRAEL.

If not dealt with properly before they go to Israel, these issues may create unnecessary tension during the year. They must clearly know your expectations. For some teens, it may be helpful to put it in writing so that there is no room for misunderstanding.

8. MENTORS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS. MAKE SURE HE OR SHE FINDS ONE.

Experience has shown that teenage-mentoring often results in happier and healthier young adults who are better prepared to face life's challenges.

Often, a relative or family friend can serve the dual role of mentor and "family away from home" while your child is in Israel. If that is not possible, the school can advise you how to find a mentor.

What should you look for in a mentor? Find someone close to your child's age who understands the teenage mentality. Most importantly, it should be someone who your child will connect with, respect and trust.

9. NETWORK WITH OTHER PARENTS.

You may find it helpful to network with other parents who have children in the same school. They may be able to give you a broader picture of what is going on in the school.

If your children are in the same circle of friends, you should also try to find out how their child thinks that your child is doing. If something doesn't sound right, investigate further. (Though this can be helpful, it is important that your child should not think that you are spying.)

Other important things to find out include, "*Is their child happy in the school?*" "*Does he or she enjoy their shiurim/classes?*" "*Is there a particular teacher the child has a close relationship with?*" "*Does he or she have any serious complaints?*"

Be sure to start networking right from the beginning of the year by introducing yourself at the airport and exchanging phone numbers.

10. EXPRESS YOUR LOVE AND TRUST AND FIND OPPORTUNITIES AND WAYS TO SHOW IT.

At the end of the day and at the end of the year, perhaps the most important factor in your child's success will be your love and devotion. Look for ways to show and express your love.

Send them thoughtful gifts, make sure you make time when they call, send them a postcard or letter - they will appreciate it (even if they don't exactly tell you). In return, you will get the satisfaction of knowing that you are truly appreciated and have given your child the most important experience of his or her life.

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